The Golden Oldies

In this issue we spotlight Bob Cherry, whose career spanned three decades. A tough defender, he captained WA many times and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1996.

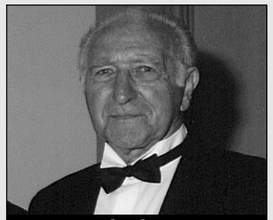
At the age of 85, Bob Cherry looks fit — and strong enough — to pull on a jersey, lace up his boots and take his familiar place in defence.

When he spoke to The Fame Game, he had just finished laying slabs for a new path at his retirement villa and was contemplating starting a woodworking project before going off to the Mandurah Country Club for a round of golf.

He played football until he was 48 and would have gone on for longer but a bad knee injury forced him to call it a day after a fine career with Subiaco/Shenton Park and Perth City and as player-coach with South Perth.

Bob's strength and determination have stood to him over the years, helping him to overcome a serious illness when he was a wee boy back in his native Scotland.

Born in the West Lothian mining village of Stoneyburn, not far from Livingston, on February 25, 1922, he caught a bad chill when he was four or five, got fluid on the brain and was very ill for a long time.



Bob Cherry

"I was very anaemic for years and didn't think I'd be able to play any sort of sport," he recalled.

"But my father and two elder brothers, who were all miners, were also keen footballers and they encouraged me — and I badly wanted to play the game, so that helped."

The family emigrated to Australia in 1929 when Bob was seven. He continued his passion for the game with Rosalie school in Shenton Park and later at Junior Tech in West Perth, where he played on the same team as Jack Smethurst — a partnership they renewed years later with the WA State senior team.

But thoughts of sporting glory were far from Bob's mind when he had to leave school a month before his 14th birthday to start work. "I was from a family of nine and those were tough times in the 1930's, so everyone had to pull their weight," he said.

"I went to work for this company that made cement. There were no mixers in those days, it was all done by hand, mixing it with an iron bar and it was tough work. I also helped my sisters sell scones around the doors in order to make extra money."

He joined the Australian Army in October, 1941 — and saw action aplenty before being discharged in 1946, finding work with a monumental masons and resuming his football career with Subiaco/Shenton Park, along with several of his brothers.

His versatility in a range of defensive positions — left back, right back and centre half — made him a key member of the State side that achieved a major breakthrough when winning the Southern States Carnival in Adelaide in 1948.

He had a season with Perth City in 1949 before rejoining Subi/Shenton Park and then captaining WA in a representative game against Australia.

Bob had a lengthy spell on the sidelines with a fractured cheekbone and found it difficult winning back his place in the State side. But he enjoyed playing again with his old club, particularly teaming up with his nephew Don McArdle, and continued playing until a knee injury ended his involvement when he was 48.

He reckons Frank Reid (Caledonians/Perth City) and Frank McShane (Victoria Park/Swan Valley) were two of the best players of his era of the late 1940's and 1950's.

"Frank Reid was a very good player, a very effective defender and he deserved more recognition than he received," said Bob. "Frank McShane was a real determined character and would go through a brick wall if asked."

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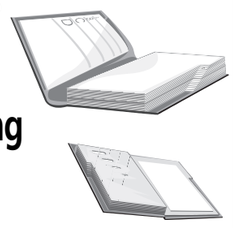

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Football Hall of Fame Western Australia

THE FAME GAME

(The official newsletter of the Football Hall of Fame Western Australia)

Issue 3 (Autumn 2007)

WA'S HISTORY MAKERS

It is 40 years since Western Australia blazed a trail for the current close links with Asia when the State team became the first Australian representative side to participate in a football tournament in that part of the world.

The WA squad was invited to compete alongside some of the strongest national sides in Asia by taking part in the prestigious Merdeka tournament, which was held in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur in August, 1967.

Although Australia had met Asian sides in friendly internationals, and World Cup qualifiers, this was the first time a representative team from Down Under had figured in an organised 11-team tournament in the world's most populous and largest continent.

The Socceroos later did compete in a tourney in Vietnam in 1967, three months after Western Australia had made the Asian breakthrough.

WA was drawn in same group as host nation Malaysia along with other national teams from India, Thailand, South Vietnam and Hong Kong. The other group comprised South Korea, Burma, Indonesia, China and Singapore.

South Korea and Burma met in the final and ended up sharing the trophy when they couldn't be seperated in a scoreless showdown. There were no penalty shoot-outs in those days.

WA's part-time players found difficulty in coping with the oppressive heat, and managed only one victory in their group stage — beating Thailand 3-1 — after narrow loses to Malaysia and Hong Kong.

They went on to beat Singapore 5-3 in the play-off to determine ninth place. Former Polish international Paul Sobek got a hat-trick for WA in that match.

Team manager Bob Brown (left), SFWA President Julius Re and Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman with the WA squad

Julius Re, the President of the Soccer Federation of WA in 1967, was the driving force behind the tour.

"This was a wonderful achievement that not only put WA on the world soccer map but also made international players out of our local players," Re said at the time.

Bob Brown, who is now treasurer of the Football Hall of Fame WA, was team manager on the 1967 tour and said that Re deserved full credit for his foresight. "It was his idea to take us to Malaysia and he did a great job of organising it," said Brown.

"This was the first time a Western-styled team had played in an international event in Malaysia. There was a lot of interest in our games for our style was so different from theirs. We had crowds of 30,000 at some of our contests."

Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's first Prime Minister following independence in 1957 and an avid sportsman and institigator of the Merdeka event — he was also president of the Asian Football Confederation — attended many functions that involved the WA team and officials.

It is hoped to mark the anniversary of this significant chapter in WA's football history with a function later in the year.

John O'Connell, one of the WA squad who won the Marah Halim Cup tournament in Indonesia in 1976 and a current member of the Hall of Fame committee, says that the 1967 squad deserves a celebration.

"We need to acknowledge their breakthrough and also to mark WA's 40 year presence in Asia, for not many Australian sports can boast such an achievement," said O'Connell.

"The team and officials were ambassadors for WA and helped to promote the State. It would be nice to have some sort of official State recognition for their achievement."

The historic WA squad: Peter Mitchell (Cracovia), Chris Wissink (Swan Athletic), Alan Lind (Cottesloe), Christian Ducasse (Olympic), Theo Papp (Windmills), Peter Giorgi (Azzurri), Dick Jones (Azzurri), Wally Musial (Cracovia), Graham Oughton (Tricolore), Iain Tannahill (Perth City), Jim McIntosh (Azzurri), Paul Sobek (Cracovia), Tony Lawlor (Azzurri), Bobby Varlow (Cottesloe), Ray Magennis (Tricolore). Player-coach: Zyggie Pieda.

TIME TO NOMINATE

The next inductions into the Football Hall of Fame Western Australia — including the Hall of Champions and the Hall of Recognition — will be in late 2008.

So, we are asking readers of The Fame Game to play a part.

If there is someone you feel is worthy of inclusion in either category, please forward nominations by contacting either Hall of Fame chairman Louis Prospero (0413 041942), treasurer Bob Brown (9446 3338), secretary Barbara Gibson (9526 0330) or committe member John O'Connell (0413 973846).

Remember, your nominees must have reached a high standard, must have achieved considerable success and contributed meaningfully to the game. They will have to meet a tough criteria in order to join the elite of the sport in WA, and the committee reserves the right to have the final say on all nominations.

The Hall of Champions is reserved for outstanding players — and the Hall of Recognition salutes the significant achievements of administrators, coaches, referees and others.

Obituaries

It has been a sad time since our last edition of The Fame Game with the death of four people who made a major impact in WA football from the 1940's onwards.

Bert Robertson, a dynamic goal-scorer and coach for several teams just after the Second World War, passed away on January 16, 2007.

Jack Smethurst, another brilliant marksman and one of Robertson's contemporaries, died in late March.

And, just a few weeks later, former top administrator David Schrandt succumbed to leukaemia.

Then, England World Cup winner Alan Ball, considered by many to be the the most influential big-name player to turn out as a guest contributor in WA, died of a heart attack on April 25.

FROM SUPER SUB TO STAR STRIKER

BERT ROBERTSON was 89 when he died in Fremantle Hospital following a stroke he suffered just after his birthday a few months earlier.

He had been featured as one of the Hall of Fame's Golden Oldies in our launch issue of The Fame Game in 2006.

Born in Dundee in Scotland, in 1917, Robertson was an up-and-coming striker with Dundee United when war broke out and he joined the Royal Navy in 1939 as a fitter.

He was involved in the evacuation at Dunkirk and was later transferred to submarines, going on to become one of the most proficient operators of periscopes in the Senior Service.

After many hair-raising encounters in freezing Arctic waters, he was transferred to the Pacific in 1944 and it was during shore leave in Fremantle in 1945 that he met his wife-to-be, Betty.

He eventually settled in Western Australia in 1947, found work helping to construct the Fremantle Power Station, and played football in those early days with Spearwood Rovers, North Perth and Fremantle City.

In 1948, at the age of 31, he was picked as player-coach of the WA State side that won the Southern States Carnival in Adelaide, the first major tournament success by the representative team.

Robertson was second top scorer in the local league in 1952 when he played for North Perth, but topped the marksmen in 1954 when he bagged 20 goals with Perth City, when he was 37.

He continued playing until he was 43, by which time he had five major medals to his name, and he maintained the success when as a coach when he led Azzurri to the league championship in 1960.

Bert was included in the Century of Champions when the Football Hall of Fame WA picked the 100 Best Players over a century of excellence between 1902 and 2002.

Bert Robertson

GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE UK?

Many thought that JACK SMETHURST, who was 85 when he died in March, could have made the big time in Britain, had he so chosen to pursue what appeared a distant dream in the war-torn 1940's.

"Jack was a bustling front-runner, hard to shift off the ball and the best of his era," said his former State team mate Alex Mansfield. "I reckon he would have been good enough to play in England."

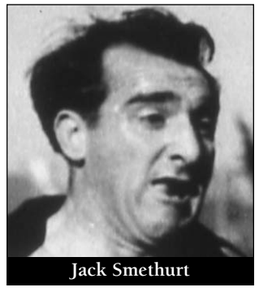
But Smethurst, who was born in Manchester in 1922 and was five when his parents emigrated to Australia, was content to play as a part-timer with several clubs in Perth and in Sydney, with Leichhardt Annadale during the war years.

He was only three weeks past his 17th birthday when he was called up for his first State team appearance, against Palestine in 1939.

But the war cut deeply into what was being predicted as a sparkling sporting career. He joined the navy in 1943, but returned to live in Perth after the war, winning many caps for the State team between 1948 and 1955 and also being a key contributor with Caledonians and Perth City.

He didn't marry until he was 42, spending nearly 43 years with his wife Betty.

Betty said that Jack was deeply honoured to have been inducted into the inauguaral Hall of Champions in 1996. He was also included in the Century of Champions.



Jack Smethurt

HUNDREDS PAY THEIR RESPECTS

The measure by which DAVID SCHRANDT, who died in mid-April age 61, was held in esteem can be judged by the huge crowd of over 600 mourners at his funeral.

They included Stan Lazaridis, who cut his teeth in the State team in the early 1990's when Schrandt was President of what was then the Professional Soccer Federation, later to be Soccer West Coast.

Born in Holland in 1946, Schrandt grew up in Perth and was a goalkeeper, and later a striker, with Morley Windmills and East Fremantle Tricolore.

He was a founding member and President of Canning Corinthians, the club which developed Craig Deans, who went on to play for Perth Glory. Deans, now contracted to Newcastle Jets, also attended the funeral.

Schrandt became PSF President in 1994 and was also President of the State's then ruling body, the Soccer Administration of WA, for a spell.

He was also deeply involved with the WA Trotting Association and was a prominent member of the travel agents' body.

THE BEST BIG-NAME

Even though England World Cup winner ALAN BALL was 37 when he made a series of guest appearances with Floreat Athena in 1982, his enthusiasm was never questioned.

"He was the best big-name player to come here," recalled former sports writer David Andrews. "He played like he played in the World Cup — very committed. He was a true professional and enjoyed being in WA."

Ball, who died in April age 61, had been brought to WA by former England Under-23 star John Sydenham, who was coach of Athena at the time.

HAIL THE FEMALE TRENDSETTERS

It's not only Western Australia's men who have reason in 2007 to celebrate the anniversary of an Asian breakthrough — the trendsetting women became the first female State representative side from Australia to dip their toes in Asia when they toured in 1977.

Sharon Loveless

The WA women's team played seven games during a hectic two-week spell in October, 1977 — winning six and drawing the other contest.

Six of the games were in Malaysia and included a 7-1 thrashing of the Malaysian national team in a contest in Penang.

The drawn game was a 0-0 deadlock with Singapore, when WA blew a chance to maintain their 100 per cent record when they missed a penalty.

"It was a wonderful tour. We received great treatment everywhere we went and I think everyone was impressed with the standard of our play," recalled Peter Dimopolous, who was President and State Coach of the WA women's association at the time.

"The only unfortunate note was that Jessie Rosebury went down with appendicitis when we were in Johor and was hospitalised. We managed to get her transferred to Singapore, where her appendix was removed."

It was Dimopolous, along with women's association secretary Barbara Gibson and team manager George Crow, who organised the tour.

"Anna Senjushenko was the main attraction. The Malaysians were fascinated by her blonde hair and tall physique. They kept wanting to touch her," said Dimopolous.

The teenaged Senjushenko, who tragically died in a car accident when only 17, went on to represent Australia in the Women's World Cup in Taiwan in 1978, as did other WA players Sharon Loveless and Sandra Brentnall.

Such was the quality in that WA side that they scooped the Australian national title in Newcastle in 1978.

Dimopolous said it was hoped that the 30th anniversary of the Asian breakthrough could be marked by some sort of get-together later this year. "It would be nice if the relevant body decided to stage a celebration, for it really was a significant event," he said.

The WA women also made history in 1980 when they became the first State side to be invited to compete in the Asian Championships in India, finishing a very commendable third in that event.

The team that toured Asia in 1977 was:

Sharon Loveless (captain), Julie Clayton (vice-captain), Marilyn Crow, Martha Ryan, Theresa Kozak, Anna Senjushenko, Heather Dunbar, Jessie Rosebury, Sandra Brentnall, Judy Pettit, Chris Barter, Maxine Sullivan, Jill Syson, Linda Lewis, Ann Prowse, Donna Pendreigh.

•LIONS TRIBUTE: Ernie Hannigan will be one of many West Australians who will make the trek to Las Vegas in late June to pay tribute to the Lisbon Lions on the 40th anniversary of Celtic becoming the first British team to win the Euopean Cup.

Glasgow-born Hannigan, who was included in the Century of Champions in 2004, is an old school mate of Sir Alex Ferguson — but in Las Vegas he will be rubbing shoulders with former Celtic coach and captain Billy McNeill and old Lions stars Tommy Gemmell, Steve Chalmers, Bertie Auld and Bobby Lennox.

•ANNIVERSARY: It's 40 years since Cracovia, who now play in the amateur league, won the D'Orsogna Cup, coming from three goals down to beat East Fremantle Tricolore 5-3 in that thrilling 1967 final.

BURT AND THE ANZAC TRADITION

The Hall of Fame patron, Julian Burt, recently featured prominently in The Australian newspaper's coverage of Anzac Day commemorations.

Burt is the great-great-grandson of Septimus Burt, who was Attorney General of WA in the 1890's and whose five sons helped establish the first ruling body in the State, known as the WA British Football Association, in 1896.

Two of Septimus Burt's sons, Theodore and Francis, were killed in France during the First World War.

Julian Burt told The Australian: "The stories of Australian valour on the Western Front have been submerged by our national focus on Gallipoli. It is time we redressed that."

A special ceremony will be held in France in 2008 to mark the 90th anniversary of the battle of Villers-Bretonneux.

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